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COUNCIL EXAMINES RELIEF FUND WORK

GREENWICH, Conn. -- The Episcopal Church's Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief has raised about \$797,000 for refugee relief efforts in Cambodia and is prepared to embark on a massive domestic refugee settlement plan, the Church's Executive Council learned last week.

Richard W. Wheeler, chairman of the Fund's executive committee and a vice-president of Citibank, explained these and other matters to the Council in a special order of business during the Council's annual meeting Feb. 13-15 at Seabury House here. Council had asked for the special order at its December meeting in order to examine Fund policies and practices in light of the rapidly expanding ministry.

Wheeler told the Council that Episcopalians had responded to the Cambodia situation with gifts totalling more than \$340,000 in the month of January alone, bringing the total for that program to \$797,000 since the special appeal was launched last year. He also told Council that roughly 55 percent of the Fund's project money goes overseas while 45 percent is spent domestically. Total income for the Fund amounted to \$2,069,593.51 last year.

Much of the hour-long examination centered around the Fund's plan to use designated federal government funds to aid refugees, develop placement and support services for refugee ministries and integrate that work into the ministry of as many dioceses as possible.

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The Fund expects to receive at least \$650,000 in such federal funds on the basis of projected refugee placements. Some \$300,000 of the funds will be used for direct refugee assistance; \$90,000 for new initiatives and reserves, and the remainder for salaries, travel and administration for the national and regional staff charged with carrying out the work.

Nine staff positions will eventually be filled in this field and the first officers have already been hired. They are: Mrs. Robert Dawson, assistant director for migration affairs; the Rev. John Huston, national field officer, the Rev. John Corn, legal advisor; and Miss Sarah Dresser, social services officer.

While the major focus was on support for legally-designated refugees, the need for broader ministries was brought dramatically home by Council member Virginia Ram of Los Angeles.

Mrs. Ram explained that a young Latin American man came to the States as a refugee from civil strife in his country. Because he was in the United States illegally, he was not eligible for refugee services. She arranged for him to return home where he would immediately receive a proper visa and a ticket back to this country. She then saw him on to a flight to Mexico, the first leg of his journey home. The plane crashed in Mexico City and the young man was killed.

Wheeler told Mrs. Ram that he wanted to talk with her and others engaged in this ministry to see if there was any way the Fund could help avert such tragedies in the future.

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